Safer Disinfecting in PreK- VT Guidance

In recent years, many Vermont schools have added preschools to their campus. Preschool are regulated by the Agency of Human Services instead of the Agency of Education. Some protocols for sanitizing and disinfecting are different but the goal of providing a healthy environment is the same. Protecting children (and staff) from infection while preventing unnecessary harmful exposure to toxic cleaning or disinfecting chemicals is essential to growing healthy children into healthy adults.

Guidance Manual For Center-Based Child Care & Preschool Programs as found on the VT Child Care Licensing Regs website: https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-rules/licensing. Starting halfway down page 67:

**Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting (subheading 5.2.6)**

**What Is the Purpose of These Rules?**
Conditions that allow a buildup of germs, pests, chemicals, dirt, dust, and moisture can cause health problems for children and staff. Relative to their size, children are exposed to more germs and toxic chemicals than adults are. Children breathe in four to six times more air than adults do, and they breathe closer to the ground where pollutants tend to collect. Children’s bodies are less able to get rid of toxic substances and germs than adult bodies. Developing and maintaining schedules and systems for cleaning promotes a safe and healthy environment for children and staff.

**What It May Look Like in Your Program Policies and Practices**

- Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting have different definitions and achieve different results. These different types of products should not be used interchangeably. For example, a product may be EPA registered as a sanitizer but not as a disinfectant, so it cannot be used as such (See Appendix V Cleaning Checklist).
- Label all cleaning products. Train staff to read labels and use the product as instructed by the manufacturer. 67
- Find safe and efficient ways to store cleaners, sanitizers, and disinfectants so that they are easily accessible to staff, while not being accessible to children.
- Some CBCPPs choose to use less-toxic products such as hydrogen peroxide or botanicals to disinfect. Household bleach is not required to be used. If bleach is used, a fresh bleach solution must be mixed daily. Always follow manufacturers' instructions for mixing any solutions.
- Avoid using products with strong chemicals and odors that can irritate the lungs and trigger asthma, headaches, and allergic skin reactions (rules 5.10.1.1 and 5.10.1.10.5).
- A soap and water mix is a reliable way to clean, especially when disinfectants and sanitizers are not required.